

Constantine's Death and Character 3²⁹

Such a deity may have satisfied the philosophers, but it certainly was not the deity whom Constantine worshipped throughout his reign. Had he been indifferent to religion, or indifferent to Christianity, had he even been anxious only to hold the balance between the rival creeds, he would never have surrounded himself by episcopal advisers; never have set his hand to such edicts as those we have quoted; never have abolished the use of the cross for the execution of criminals or have forbidden Jews to own Christian slaves; never have called the whole world time and again to witness his zeal for Christ; never have lavished the resources of the Empire upon the building of sumptuous churches; never have listened with such extraordinary forbearance to the wranglings of the Donatists and the subtleties of Arians and Athanasians; never have summoned or presided at the Council of Nicaea; and certainly never have made the welfare of non-Roman Christians the subject of entreaty with the King of Persia. Constantine was prone to superstition. He was grossly material in his religious views, and his own worldly success remained still in his eyes the crowning proof of the Christian verities. But the sincerity of his convictions is none the less apparent, and even the atrocious crimes with which he sullied his fair fame cannot rob him of the name of Christian. It was a name, says St. Augustine,* in which he manifestly delighted to boast, mindful of the hope which he reposed in Christ (*Plane Christiana nomine gloriosus, memor spei quant gerebat in Christ o*).

**Contra Lit. PetiL*, ii., 205.